

INTERVIEWEE: ED PEARL

INTERVIEWER: Victor Cohen

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Victor Cohen: So you were about to say you were interviewed extensively?

Ed Pearl: Over the years, I taped intermittently artists that I liked that were on stage. I had a tape recorder attached to the sound system. Just a Webcor, or whatever. It was nothing – it turns out that the tapes actually were excellent, but I didn't know that. I mean, I didn't know, nor did I care. I listened to it a little bit and I would – or play it for the artist, or whatever. But I never did anything with them. I wound up with like six hundred and some tapes.

VC: Like reel-to-reel or cassette?

EP: Reel-to-reel, all of it. So after the closure of the second Ash Grove, which was on the Santa Monica pier for a year, I started thinking about releasing the tapes, you know, after all those years. Well, that was in '97, so finally, this last year, we sold the tapes to the person that bought Wolfgang's Vault. That is Bill Graham's collection. Bill – I forget his name – anyway, he's the president of a company that does that, so it's going to be part of Wolfgang's Vault. And it's probably going to be released on the Internet and YouTube.

VC: For free?

EP: Yeah. Listening for free, and downloading for pennies, whatever, a dollar or something like that. And part of the contract – and he was very happy to do it – was that they're going to do a boxed set. Now, the people who are listening to the

tapes and making them into – they're the same people that did the Woody Guthrie collection in New York. I forget the name of the person that heads the company, but anyway, he and Bill Sagan – that's his name, William Sagan. And Bill Sagan's person is putting it in order, and then it's going into the treatment center of this company. Anyway, so the head of the company, who's probably your age, and dresses worse than you do – seriously. I mean, he's a complete – he loves music and he's a complete independent techno-lunatic. He loves it.

So I have these two guys came out here, and Bill was supposed to be out here, but he couldn't make it. Anyway, they interviewed me for three days. I mean, Bill paid for their hotel and all our meals. So he made a really big deal about it. And they were – so it was quite extensive. They had gone to the Ash Grove website and studied that, and everything like that. And they brought a setup with a mike, and so on, and we just sat here, the three of us.

So there is that documentation, and that's going to be part of the boxed set. I don't know when that'll be released. I have no idea if it's this year or next. But everything is sort of on a prime – what happened was, Bill Sagan also owns a recording studio outside of Chicago, between Chicago and New York. A lot of players, young bands and whatnot, they stop there and get their stuff made. And he started asking them who some of their favorite people were, and a surprising number of the best ones that he was recording mentioned artists that are uniquely on the Ash Grove roster. Have you looked at the –

VC: The website?

EP: Yeah.

VC: Yeah.

EP: Did you look at the artists that played the original Ash Grove?

VC: Yeah.

EP: It's prodigious.

VC: Yeah. Impressive.

EP: Those are the people that were mentioned by all these younger bands. So just his own sense of "me," and also, he loved the music and they've been listening to it.

By the way, the tapes that I recorded on the Webcor are astoundingly well preserved. Now, I have carried them from pillar to post, through fires and everything. The thing was, I never played them, and somehow they're coming out crystal clear and it's not a big deal, even though they got the best guy. They can't believe it. This cheesy stuff that I'm doing through my sound system, which was always, you know, somebody gave me something, or whatever.

VC: Do you think I can contact them and see if I could –

EP: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. No problem.

VC: Because that would be helpful.

EP: Yeah. I'll give you the guy's – I'll do it right now so we won't forget.

VC: That would be very useful.

EP: The guy that – as soon as I spot his name, then I'll remember. I'll remember in a minute, or I'll find it. Yeah, so they interviewed me quite a bit.

VC: And that was about the musicians and the club?

EP: About everything, the whole story of what inspired me to do it, starting from the beginning. Just the whole history. So, basically, a lot of the same stuff that we will

do here today, which I don't mind doing, but I'm just saying it exists. And all of them are on my list, seriously, so they're all getting everything. And I haven't scared him off yet. No, not at all. I mean, Bill likes it. I mean, he's at least a liberal, even though he's very wealthy. He comes from poor Irish. His father was a worker. So he has a natural sympathy for that.

I can't find it right now. I'll remember it.

VC: That would be good. Because if I could hear – if nothing else, it would help anything we do here, I'm sure. That'll be good. That's amazing. How many hours did you say – I mean, like how many tapes? It must have been big. You were just lugging it around?

EP: What?

VC: The tapes.

EP: Oh, the five hundred and sixty tapes? Five hundred and sixty tapes, with two or three performances on each tape. Yeah, I would just – whenever. I just lucked out that – I can't even remember what – I don't even know whether they were in the office when the place – really, the last fire was devastating. But the office itself was, at least two rooms of it, were okay. I mean, charred, but – so I was able to function there, and there was actually a telephone, an odd telephone, that was working, that wasn't the same number as the regular system. I can't remember why I had that there. It was just there for a long time. It was an old dial phone, and it stayed on for like four weeks, or three weeks. By that time, I was out of there.

VC: Right. Maybe today we could just block out like the major – like how would you segment all those?

EP: Early background, background preceding the opening of the Ash Grove, immediate background, which has to do, at least partly, with the end of the Cold War – or, not Cold War, whatever it's called, McCarthyism or whatever. I mean, the cultural change that happened.

VC: So the end of the fifties.

EP: Yeah. Starting in '57, I think. I'd say that it would include that. But it's stuff related directly to the Ash Grove, and that thing started for me like in '53 or '54. So earlier than that, then '53 to '58, then the Ash Grove first period, opening and putzing around trying to find my feet. Then the traditional music enters. Traditional music takes over, I should say, which was like '61, '62. The first three or four years were different than what I did after that. Then that goes up to – the next period would be both amplified music and the new politics, the sixties. It was more than cultural. I mean, where I became political. That would be the end of '67 through the end of the Ash Grove. The end of the sixties era really lasted through '73, which was my period exactly.

I guess it's not really coincidental because the Ash Grove was really floundering at the end of the – 1973. First of all, the new artists had shrunk to next to nothing. I remember at the end of '72, when – I guess it was Nixon bombed Hanoi and the Bach Mai Hospital. I got a call from Holly Near, and I had seen her. Earlier I had been a friend of Jane Fonda, and Jane had organized this "Fuck the Army" tour, which was "Free the Army" in the papers. Holly was in it and I'd seen Holly perform, so when she called me and started to explain who she was, I said, "You don't have to."

She wanted to do a benefit for the Bach Mai Hospital, and she had Linda Ronstadt and – I can't remember who else, but some really good people. They had this saying. And we became friends, and she performed through the last nine months, or ten months – she performed for a year at the Ash Grove, from December of one year till November of the next year, regularly. And the kind of people she drew, younger people, a lot of girls from high school, junior high. Reminded me so much of what happened in the early years, one wave after another. There was this huge wave of excitement of younger people, and so on.

And in this case, I realized that I hadn't felt that way like in five years. Well, let's see. Not five years, but let's say starting in '69. After the first fire, things – I mean, I pulled big crowds, like with the Johnny Otis review, or whatever. And Doc Watson would come, and so on. There were still big acts. But it just – people had become, you know, had achieved status, or whatever.

Then at a certain point, all of the people who had given themselves – like I was telling you about the Venice scene – to the Movement, particularly starting in '68. There was a period when I swear to God, just standing in the Ash Grove, I heard no fewer than a hundred or a hundred and fifty kids say, "I just quit my job. I want to devote myself to the Movement." People just thought here was the opportunity and dropped everything. And then they were exhausted, after three years of doing that, living like, you know, nothing.

There was a legal collective, the Bar Sinister, the Left bar, where they were given like free – I mean, these people were defending the Panthers and everyone that got accused of anything. They were among the brightest and best of graduates

of Harvard and Yale from here in Los Angeles. Three of them worked for me as waitresses because they weren't making money at all. I'm telling you. They'd be waitresses, then they'd be in court the next day, putting on their suit and stuff. Seriously. I mean, people did that.

VC: That's one of the things that comes up in my interviews with NAM people, that they were in the Movement, and that's just what they did. They would be in the house. One person had a job one day, and one person had a job the next. Together they would scrape rent and a car together. And the rest of the time was organizing.

EP: Well, yeah, that's right.

VC: It's hard for me to fathom.

EP: Well, I mean, you had to be there. The spirit of the thing was – I went to a meeting where these hundred people didn't know what the fuck they were doing. They were trying to organize the Peace and Freedom Party. So I raised my hand and I said, Well, why don't you do this? I did that two or three times. I really just went there to become political, and it turns out we didn't know – this was the end of '67. Or, pardon me, like September of '67. Something like that.

Well, within four weeks, three weeks even, the person who headed the campaign for Los Angeles County resigned and nominated me to take his place. Apparently, they'd met already because all the entire leadership voted unanimously for me to take his place, if I would do it. So I did it.

So I did that full time, and I actually – I can't remember when I – I think during the period of the registration, which ended on September 31st of that year, when we got enough – we got thirty-seven thousand new registrants, and I ran it

like I was running like when I did Joan Baez and Bob Dylan at the Hollywood Bowl, because I knew where our people were going, I knew when they went, I knew where they wouldn't go, I knew how to talk to them, I knew where to deploy people and where not to deploy people. And none of these people had had any work experience. They just didn't know what they were doing. And I knew, because of the Ash Grove, not only artists, but I knew a lot of the disc jockeys, because a lot of disc jockeys had become political, even though they were liberal loudmouths, basically, a number of them. But we had access to them, so we put everything –

So I ran the campaign, and I ran it with a person, Jack – oh, my God. I can't remember one of my really good friends. Well, the person in the Free Speech Movement – remember, Mario Savio stood on top of a car?

VC: Right.

EP: Jack Weinberg was in the car. Jack and I became very close friends. And he already was an extremely developed, brilliant, more than brilliant, scientist. He was a committed socialist, and he was part of the International Socialist – it was called the Independent Socialist Club. I joined that for just a short while. It was a very bad fit. I supported Cuba, they didn't. They thought there should be a revolution there. Anyway, Jack knows – I mean, he devoted a lot of his life to that.

We became really close friends, and I developed politically just in driving around with him. I mean, he posed questions to me that I either hadn't thought about, or I was forced to debate him, or whatever. So I really developed a lot politically.

VC: That was '67?

EP: Yeah. And then he just stayed down here. He was the statewide coordinator, actually, but he spent a lot of time here because he had given up on Berkeley and the Bay Area. They were the first ones to get like eight thousand, ten thousand, and so he stayed there. You know what I mean?

VC: Right.

EP: I mean, they exhausted all the radicals they could, until the Communist Party did a flip-flop and joined us, and that was a big help also. Because they had this huge constituency of older people that knew what they were doing, and all of that. They weren't around. They were against us at the beginning. Dorothy Healy had tried to prevent the organizing of the Peace and Freedom Party. There was a Peace and Freedom Movement, and they had met somewhere in Fresno or – I can't remember where it was. It was before I got into it. So the question was whether to form a progressive block within the Democratic Party or to form a new party. Dorothy wanted to form a ticket, not a party. Of course, the Independent Socialists wanted a party, and the spirit of the times wanted separation from the communists and Dorothy – I never became friends with Dorothy until the seventies. I never met her, I just knew I didn't like her. Actually, I loved her. She was one of the most amazing human beings I've ever met. But I had my own prejudices about that. I mean, not built on nothing, but just in stereotyping people.

But then, after that, in that capacity, and because I was the only statewide leader that was unaffiliated and not tied into a particular thing, and because everyone knew me as running the Ash Grove, I was asked to be part of important

committees that I was not qualified to be on there. Except they would ask me for decisions when people like Bob Avakian and Jack Weinberg were at loggerheads on the question of whether to send organizers to a particular thing and when the question boiled down to whether there was already some – you could come in and just tell people the truth and they would gather around you, or you had to work for organization. Weinberg was for working through established organizations, unions, whatever was. And Bob thought the message would be sufficient.

I mean, it took me a while to figure all that stuff out, because I had never been part of any of it. I'd always been Left by my own mind and had a reputation as a leftist. But I'd never done anything. I let Hollywood for SANE with Steve Allen and the whole cast of "Laugh-In" do shows at the Ash Grove for the Antinuclear Movement.

VC: Really? I didn't know Steve Allen was involved in that.

EP: Yeah, Hollywood for SANE, that was his creation.

VC: I'm just curious. He would bring acts to the Ash Grove?

EP: Yeah. Lily Tomlin, Rowan and Martin, the cast of "Laugh-In." They were all part of his gang.

VC: I had no idea.

EP: Yeah. Well, everyone respected him, until he thought I was a communist. He had a private investigator who protected him from communism, who came up with the astounding revelation that I was a communist. We were supposed to have a big thing for Hollywood for SANE, and then they said they were going to cancel it. I said, "You can't do that. This is crazy. We already have advertising out." They

said, "Well, we're going to do it." So I called my lawyer – this is a whole other story, but I have a lawyer that – do you know who Steven Reinhart is?

VC: Yeah, a judge.

EP: One of the most liberal judges on the – well, Steven, when I first started the Ash Grove in 1958, in July – in November or October, I can't – in November I think it was – well, let me back up. I started in July. The police department and the conservative people in Los Angeles started getting nervous about the explosion of youth at that time. After I started the Ash Grove, like in August or something, they made up something called the police permit. You had to have a police permit for entertainment. I didn't even know about it. It never affected me because I was putting on entertainment, and the first several months were just pure joy and hell at the same time anyway. So at a certain point – I think it was November – did you ever hear of Chief Parker?

VC: Sure.

EP: Well, Parker had it in his head that the Ash Grove and I were beatniks. Well, I never was a beatnik. When I finally met the beatniks, I realized that we had nothing in common, *whatsoever*. I was engaged, they were not engaged, they were separatists. I was for the farmers and working class and all this kind of stuff, and they were – it was just the oddest pairing.

But anyway, the police raided the place when Barbara Dane was performing. It so happens that Barbara somehow had become friends with Steve and his wife Mary, and they were in the audience when the police came and closed it down. The cops told me you had to close the thing or they're going to arrest me,

and everyone connected with it. So Steven came up to me and said could he help. Let's go over to Barbara Dane's house and talk about it. So we went over there and we organized a strategy. He was already a rising star in the Democratic Party, and he was the first Jew hired by O'Melveny and Myers. He was working for O'Melveny and Myers. He was the top student, you know, *Harvard Law Review*, all this kind of thing, the top student at Harvard.

So Steven did all this legal work and organizing on O'Melveny and Myers' time. Well, I spent time both working on that and also looking for another place because Kate and I thought for sure that we were not going to – even with all the work and everything we put into it. But we knew we were on to something. I did this with my love, so we –

VC: Who was that?

EP: Well, somebody named Kate Hughes. More about her later. So anyway, within two months, or something like that, Steven had gotten Rosalind Weiner, who already knew about the Ash Grove through a mutual friend of mine, also Jewish, was the youngest person ever elected to the L.A. City Council. She was like twenty-two when she was elected. Then she married Gene Wyman, who was a major political – so she was Rosalind Wyman already. So she organized and lobbied the police commission, so they granted me a license, having denied me one. The first thing we did, we went to the police, after they _____, to get a license and they denied me because – God knows why. They just denied me. Mainly Chief Parker wanted me denied.

VC: Were there no clubs in L.A. at the time?

EP: There were a lot, yeah. For all I know, I was going to – they were trying to get me, and then they could get others. I still was not – you understand, by October and November of that year, I was not – first of all, I never was interested in the other clubs. Kate and I, when I was courting her we put on concerts and they were successful. Flamenco and then folk and things like that. I did three concerts that were astoundingly, astoundingly, successful.

VC: Really?

EP: Yeah.

VC: And this was before the Ash Grove opened.

EP: Before the Ash Grove opened. And then by the second one, I had – well, it's all tied in together, but at a certain point, nightclubs were asking me to book entertainment for them, by the second time I did this – we did this. So we went around and looked at the nightclubs. First of all, neither one of us had almost ever been in a nightclub. Second of all, she's a Boston Brahmin who never went into a nightclub. And I'm a Jewish kid from whatever. Aside from _____, there was no liquor in the house, none. (laughs) We both thought that they must be Mafia, anyway, on top of it. So we just didn't want to do that, which is one of the things that caused me to really open my own place. We didn't know what we were doing. We didn't. But when I saw what other people had done –

So anyway, we were first denied, and then we finally got – Steve managed to get all the ducks in a row, and I did some sound mitigation for the neighbors so they wouldn't join in on the protests, and all this. I know it wasn't I that did it. It

was like two of my customers were teachers at Cal Tech and they brought out a sound machine, and they used the right materials, and they –

I mean, it was like Ash Grove was instantly popular among the expressive liberals of Los Angeles, Jewish and non-Jewish. So it always had that populist kind of opening. It never was a nightclub. First of all, I opened without liquor. When we reopened, we realized that we had to – we were told – we didn't want liquor. We opened purely. We just served coffee and all that. With these two big machines doing steam things and espresso, things like that. Somebody complained that we gotta let them sing. Do you have to do your washing right in the middle of the set, and all that. It was the steam machine going [makes a noise]. So we did all kinds of things with my Cal Tech friends, my new Cal Tech friends, all kinds of things.

Oh, Mensa also came to the rescue with a printing press, the guys from Mensa. Just I had all these people around. I mean, Laddie Dill, really important – Peter Voulkos. In the corner there, you can't see it, but that's a Peter Voulkos construction.

VC: Oh, right there?

EP: Yeah. That's Peter – he just loaned it to us and then said, "Ah, just keep it." And Kate knew all of the – well, friends of hers were major artists. Gerd Koch, Gerd and Irene. They brought in a – so we had really – this was right before even La Cienega opened and L.A. started becoming a major art thing. They centered around the Ash Grove, so like our first Christmas sale was pottery by all these great artists. Peter and – just everyone that did sculpture.

VC: So there was no place at the time for them to really hang out?

EP: No, there was a beatnik place in Venice. There was sort of – _____ Bickell and a guy named Herbie – I told you this – opened the Unicorn on Hollywood Boulevard. It was different. I was on Melrose, and Felix Landau, who opened one of the places, he had a little art studio, also on Melrose. So a lot of his artists came over. He was doing framing and things like that. Nothing was really there, so Gerd and Irene were at the center of the new expressionists around Los Angeles. And they're from Ojai. Kate was also. Her background is Boston, the Forbes family, actually. The same family as John Carey. John made sure to say it's the Forbes, not the magazine, but – anyway, it's an important American family.

So, what was my point? Anyway, we overturned the blockage of – they granted me an entertainment license in February, I think, of '59 and we opened then, with a license, with a beer and wine license and things.

VC: Were you showing folk music at that time?

EP: Well, I don't know what you mean by folk music.

VC: Well, yeah, I guess –

EP: Yeah. So the first period was with – because I had taken guitar with _____ Lomax Haas, she got Brownie McGee who was playing – so I go from Brownie McGee and my guitar teacher, Guy _____. I think I told you this.

VC: Yeah.

EP: So we used Rolf Cahn[?] and Stan Wilson, and then Bud and Travis came in, and they became instant hits. They were from – I think Bud lived in Los Angeles,

Travis lived in San Francisco, and they had formed a duo. Bud Dashiell and Travis Edmonson, and they became very popular fairly quickly.

VC: What kind of music would they play?

EP: Well, they played a variety of some Spanish music, but it was very stylized. I mean, they're excellent, they're really excellent performers. And they had funny jokes and a good chemistry between them and a good chemistry with the audience. They were both pretty. Well, no, Travis was pretty, Bud was sort of – I don't know how to – anyway, it doesn't matter. But they were a good thing. And Odetta played, and Barbara Dane walked in and said, "This is my place. I want to play here." I said, "I don't think I can afford you." She said, "Oh, let's not worry about that. I'll play. When do you want me to play?" So I gave her fifty percent of the gross.

VC: Who was that you just said?

EP: Barbara Dane.

VC: I don't think I've ever heard Barbara Dane.

EP: Really?

VC: Really.

EP: Do you want me to play her while we're listening?

VC: Yeah.

EP: Okay. I've got "Barbara Dane at the Ash Grove" right here.

VC: So was it more like a cabaret almost, at the beginning?

EP: It was not a small place. The Ash Grove was not a small place. [long pause, then music playing] [another long pause]

VC: Is this Barbara Dane?

EP: I don't have it on yet. Let me – I've got to find it. I have it on tape. Here we go.

[music playing – woman singing]

VC: Is that her playing piano, too?

EP: No. Kenny Whitson.

VC: When was this recorded?

EP: Before '65. Kenny got sick, a relatively young man, and he died of neglecting bowel cancer, or something. But what a talent. [music playing] You can't hear – it's not – [woman singing] The base player is Wellman Braud, who we never heard of, but he was Duke Ellington's bassist. When he retired, which was like in '56, or something like that, Duke had to replace him with three bassists. And that's the truth. So he retired, but he was a friend of Kenny's. Barbara just started out playing her guitar, and this guy came up to her like after the second show, or the third show, whatever, at two in the morning, and said, "Do you mind if I play with you?" I had a really nice piano. _____ was the pianist, a classical pianist, and Tanya _____. One of the best recordings, though, is _____ program that was recorded at the Ash Grove by a really good engineer. Harvey – I forget his last name now. Just through happenstance – or he contacted Barbara, or something like that, so she put it out as "Barbara Dane at the Ash Grove," which I have somewhere here. She's really superb. So anyway, so he started playing and Barbara said that she knew he was _____. I mean, she's not a blues guitarist.

VC: Right. So then the music that you had at the Ash Grove at first was sort of –

EP: Everything. Eclectic. But also advanced auditions, you might say. We had auditions, but I wasn't going to ask somebody like Stan Wilson who had a record and everything like that _____. So he was a second-rate Josh White, and he's not my cup of tea in the first place. So I had good people. I had the gospel people behind her and not the group I'm about to mention, but something like Bessie Griffin and the Gospel Pearls – I saw at an afternoon thing on Sunset Boulevard, and it was really great. So I wound up putting them on, and they became an extremely important Ash Grove thing.

VC: What were they called?

EP: Well, there were two entities that got together. [music playing] This is Kenny also, he plays trumpet. [woman singing] He was a white guy, just an out of sight musician.

VC: Local guy? L.A.?

EP: Yeah, I think so.

VC: You were saying, about the gospel?

EP: Bessie Griffin was vocally on the level of Mahalia Jackson. Somebody, a promoter, a manager of – I don't know what you call him, but a really important guy. A major fuck-up in his life and he dumps Blackwell. He was Sam Cook's manager. What he did was he took the gospel singer Sam Cook and made him a pop singer. He was Little Richard's manager. I mean, that's _____, he was like a circus manager. So he was a major thing and a major disappointment to me, but also had a big – I don't know – he just _____ his own life _____. I didn't realize

that he actually, to a certain extent, depended on me to give him legitimacy. I didn't realize that until _____ told me that.

VC: Because you had the club and you had booked his act?

EP: Well, this was years later. I put on a major concert with Little Richard and the much older Gospel Pearls, without their person. With Bessie Griffin and the Gospel Pearls, but without Dolores Addison, who had gone into acting. And she's Dolores Hall. She still is an actress, but she's getting a lot of – what's the name of that thing that Sidney Portier was a detective in the South? What's the name of that film? Do you know what I'm talking about? He solves a murder, goes down –

VC: Yeah.

EP: And it was a series on television.

VC: Yeah. *Heat of the Night*?

EP: Yeah, *In the Heat of the Night*. In the television series, Dolores was the black woman. But she was Dolores Addison and just the most magnetic – one of the most magnetic performers I've ever known. My girlfriend, Kate, who was astoundingly beautiful, said, "Dolores was the only woman I think I've ever been jealous of." She was so fucking beautiful and so engaging. It was amazing. And her boyfriend wouldn't take his eyes – you know, he was terrified of anything. She finally dumped him and she went to New York and she became an actress. Thank God.

Anyway, I went back from whatever – oh, yeah. So when I got active in politics, one of the things I did is, in the Peace and Freedom Party, was I was asked to be part of the three people who went to talk with the Black Panther Party and

_____ between the Black Panther and Peace and Freedom Party. I think Eldredge was in jail then, still. I'm pretty sure. I think so. But anyway, so I met Bobby and Huey. Then, after the campaign and we became a party, I worked to help nominate Eldredge. He asked me if I would be his campaign coordinator for L.A. County, so I said yeah. So I did that. So at that point, I took a leave of absence from the Ash Grove.

VC: When was that?

EP: In '68. For several months. I mean, I came in like once a week. But I had a really good staff and a particular assistant, Sandy Getz, that really could run the joint.

VC: When you started, you said – like when was Steve Allen – when did you start –

EP: That would be in like 1960.

VC: So almost immediately after it opened.

EP: Well, a year, year and a half.

VC: Were you interested in _____?

EP: Oh. Yeah. We marched with Linus Pauling against – in '59, I remember that, down Wilshire Boulevard against nuclear – remember there was something called the March to _____ in England. It was a major – the first antinuclear mass public expression. That was done by _____. So Linus Pauling headed it here, and his wife – Linus and Ava, I think. Ava Pauling. Yeah. Like I said, there were all these Cal Tech people around me anyway, and he was teaching there. So we went on that.

No, I had politics before the Ash Grove. I knew I was a socialist for a long time. I just never really did anything about it except, you know, argue with people.

VC: So the Ash Grove – I guess my question is, so when it started, it was pretty eclectic musically but there was still – politics was in the mix at all times, too?

EP: Well, yes. See, I'm going backwards now, and I – because _____ saying, well, just as a sketch. I joined the _____ Zionist Movement when I was twelve. The first meeting I went to, I'll never forget it in my life. There was a guy named Norman Gratz, who was a – what's somebody who studies bugs?

VC: Oh, an entomologist.

EP: He was an entomologist. He had a term that – he says, "Society is built like a pyramid. At the bottom are farmers, then come workers, and at the very top are the intellectuals." Then _____, he says, "And here's Jewish society. The bottom are the _____." (laughs) And then at the top are the intellectuals. He said, "Well, we have to change this." As a young person, I got the socialist message as part and parcel with the science. And people were creating, kibitzing, and all this kind of stuff. His name was _____, and he went to Israel and he lived there. I don't know if he remained there or not.

But anyway, so I got my socialism articulated. I'd felt it before. My father was a tool and dye maker, a machinist, and was the steward for his Lockheed plant, for the workers. He was the spokesperson. So I always had his politics, which was (1) hating the capitalist system, and (2) expecting _____ return. (laughs) Which I knew. But he never went much beyond that, that I ever knew about. In fact, when communists – there were two men that came to talk with him, so I sat in on the talk. I started arguing with them because I started talking about Stalin, and this and that. So they came back two more times. By that time, I was really prepared. I'm telling

you, I was like ten years old or something _____. (laughs) I'd read the paper and I'd pick out things that I would ask him about. (laughs) When I finally _____ my father, I don't know whether he was grateful or he hated me for it. But he really never told me anything.

So I always had this – I don't know – this predilection for democratic socialism, always, just as long as I can remember. I actually led my junior high school in a walkout like in '49 or '50 because Gerald L.K. Smith was – I was talked into it by guys at the playground who went to Roosevelt High School, and I was like an eighth grader, or something like that, still in – it wasn't middle school then, it was junior high school. You went seven, eight, nine. I don't think I was seventh grade, but – anyway, they pulled a walkout. It turned out they were members of the Communist Party. It made sense. See, if I knew them and I played ball with them, everything was okay. I mean, because I didn't know who they were. I knew years later. But, I mean, I knew nothing. I really didn't. But I organized Hollenbeck Junior High School. I had _____.

And we left and we walked all the way downtown to the Board of Education. Gerald L.K. Smith was going to speak at Los Angeles High School and we protested that. And they wound up canceling it, because they were overwhelmed with all these kids pouring out of all the schools. And we met the kids, black kids – we were Mexican and Jewish, basically.

VC: In Boyle Heights?

EP: In Boyle Heights, yeah, at that time. But everyone went. All the whole school went.

VC: Good.

EP: Yeah. I'm not kidding. It was like – well, as soon as kids saw other people doing it. And these people hated us, they hated Jews and Mexicans, so _____ the Armenians and the Russians and the Japanese kids that had already come back from the camps and all that. Everyone walked out. But somebody had to organize it. Mr. Reinhart got on the microphone and was telling them that everyone would be expelled. So we all walked out. So we were all suspended. And then, one after another, we went back into school if we said we were sorry. I refused. I was the only one. So I _____ for about – that was a deal worked out by – it so happens – did you ever hear of Ben Margoles, the lawyer?

VC: Yeah.

EP: So Ben apparently lived in the neighborhood, because he was our lawyer. He represented all the kids that walked out. I don't know, I'm sure it was the Communist Party. I mean, I really had no idea of anything of the superstructure of this whole thing. But I refused. So then Ben came over to the house, he talked to my parents. My mother was crying. My father – the family, poor Ed. My mother _____ the family is religious. (laughs) So they were praying for me. So I caved after about two weeks. (laughs) But I stayed _____. I started sleeping in the playhouse. I wouldn't stay at home because _____, et cetera.

So I've been like an activist, crazy person for a long time. Starting nightclubs. My mother hated that, by the way, to call it a nightclub. She loved the Ash Grove. She just said, "Oh, Ed, what are you –" I called it that because partly

because she hated it. I don't know what it was. It was open at night. What can I say?

VC: Was the clientele – did they know you were involved with SANE and stuff like that?

EP: Oh, yeah. I never – oh, what I wanted to say –

[recorder skips]

– because he had come out here a couple of times. It's like he creates – I mean, Bill is a grown man, and when I knew him, he was already – he just walks up there and does it. I mean, Clarence would be behind, but then gradually he was doing this stuff. He would drive the whole group. The whole group was just rhythmically attached to Clarence's thoughts, musical thoughts is how I put it. So we had a genuine genius, creative genius, developing before our eyes from childhood to grownup. He would have changed country music had he not been killed by a drunken driver.

VC: Wow! Terrible.

EP: Yeah. He was seventy-three. About two months, or one month, before the Ash Grove got burned down. And I had that on my mind. I was happy, in a way, that the Ash Grove didn't burn down till after he was dead. He was like my kid brother. I really was very close to him. Just personally I really liked him a lot. Loved him, actually.

VC: Do you want to stop there?

EP: Yeah.

VC: It's been about two hours.

EP: Yeah, it is, exactly.

[end]

VC: So you were saying that that was the first part before you had to jettison some of the –

EP: Yeah, before the change. We'll go into that later.

VC: Yeah. We'll pick it up there at the change from –

EP: I had plays, too, in the first part. I didn't even talk about that. There were some wonderful plays. There was a great theater company that played at the Ash Grove, regularly. UNESCO and _____. That's where David Crosby – he was one of the guys in the – *Waiting for Godot* was sitting in the garbage cans. That's how I know David.

VC: Okay. Let's stop there.

EP: Yeah.

[end]